Book Review: Islam and Christianity

Ali Quli Qara'i

بسم الله الرحمن الرحیم

Book Review Islam and Christianity

:Writer

Ali Quli Qarai

:Published in print

al-Tawhid Islamic Journal

:Digital Publisher

Ghaemiyeh center of computerized researches

Contents

Book Review Islam and Christianity

BOOK ID

Authors(s): Ali Quli Qarai

Category: Comparative Religion

Journal: Vol.۲, N.۴

Publisher(s): al-Tawhid Islamic Journal

Topic Tags: Islam Christianity

point

Language

English

A review of Montgomery Watt's book 'Islam and Christianity today', in which the author who has studied Islam for over fourty years, asks searching questions both about Islam and his own faith in Christianity.

Book Review: Islam and Christianity

Introduction

Islam and Christianity: A Review Article by Ali Quli Qara'i

The reviewer `Ali Quli Qara'i is the editor of Al-Tawhid (English). Soon after the Islamic Revolution of Iran he brought out a monthly journal in English, The Message of Peace, from Qum. Montgomery Watt is one of the leading living Orientalists, who has written and compiled a large number of books on various aspects of Islam, Muslim history and Islamic thought.

Islam and Christianity Today-A Contribution To Dialogue, W. Montgomery Watt

London, Routledge Kegan Paul, ۱۹۸۳; pp. ۱۵۷; $ ۸.۹۵

.(The reviewer ` Ali Quli Qara'i is the editor of Al…Tawhid (English

Soon after the Islamic Revolution of Iran he brought out a monthly journal in English, The Message of Peace, from Qum. Montgomery Watt is one of the leading living Orientalists, who has written and compiled a large number of books on various .aspects of Islam, Muslim history and Islamic thought

Islam and Christianity Today is the rather vague title of a book which consists of the "inner dialogue" of an Orientalist who has been engaged in the study of Islam (mainly Sunnite) for almost forty years. His study and appreciation of Islam caused

p: ١

him to ask searching questions about his own beliefs as a Christian. W. Montgomery .Watt has a sympathetic regard and respect for Islam and presumably for all religions

All religions are true," he seems to declare with Gandhian generosity, though he finds" Christianity more congenial and, implicitly, "truer," though he may not say it explicitly in the interest of the "outer dialogue" with Muslims. In any case, he is not, apparently, a secular student of religion. Consequently his inner dialogue originates from an effort to defend his religious consciousness in the midst of the West's predominantly secular .(the modern epithet for "pagan") scientific culture

This somewhat inconclusive defense is undertaken in the second chapter of the book entitled, "The Affirmation of Religious Truth against Scientism." Watt is conscious that by undertaking this exercise he is also doing some service to his Muslim friends, the .study of whose religion has been the ground for his expertise

He says, "The meeting of Islam and Christianity at the present time takes place in a situation in which both are subject to attack from many quarters, and the Christian who defends his own beliefs against such attacks find that he is at the same time .(defending some of the beliefs of his Muslim friend". (p. ۶

In this chapter Watt, basing his argument on the writings of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, John Macmurray, Michael Polanyi and Peter Berger as he himself

acknowledges undertakes the defense of religion. If not his conceptual structure, the conclusions he reaches

p: ٢

.are basically close to those of the pragmatists

After a somewhat sociological, philosophical dialogue, which winds through such notions as the sociological theory of the social construction of reality advanced by Berger and Luckman, a discussion of the common sense view of the world, the correspondence and coherence theories of truth, and the centrality of action, it finally lands in the precincts of pragmatism though without making any undue fuss of it with .the conclusion

The satisfactory quality of life claimed for the members of religious community" normally includes an adequate level of material well being and harmonious social relationships, but the ultimate criterion of satisfactoriness is that life should be .(meaningful" (p. ٢١

Though the sufferings and sacrifices of some for the cause of faith are a difficult problem from the viewpoint of a pragmatic justification of religion. It does not disprove the contention that true religious belief is accompanied by a more .(satisfactory quality of life (p. ٢١

Watt defends religion and religious pluralism in one breath by asserting that, all the great religions over a period of centuries have enabled vast number of people to lead .(a satisfactory life (p. ٢٢

Either Watt is a pragmatist and does not need deeper spiritual reasons for confirmation of the truth of religion, or since his audience is the modern Western educated man, he is forced to base his defense on pragmatic grounds. The satisfaction and meaning obtained from various religions by their followers do not mean "that each statement of each

p: ٣

religion is to be regarded as true in isolation, but that the symbolic system of each religion, taken as a whole, presents a view of reality which is sound in many or most (relevant aspects". (p. ۲۲

The Issue of Religious Pluralism Explored

This belief provides the grounds for religious pluralism taken for granted by Watt, but it swiftly runs into obvious difficulties. What is a satisfactory life? What is the criterion of a meaningful life? How should one know for certain what the "relevant aspects" are? Is the aim of religion deliverance or satisfaction? Is it sufficient to lead a ?satisfactory life to have the surety of salvation

Does it not amount to making complaisance the test of truth? Moreover, even if one were able to identify most of the "relevant aspects," is it sufficient for one's salvation? A similar criterion would not be applicable in case of physical well…being. Of course, a physician may not ignore the serious condition of heart disease for the reason that many or most bodily organs are functioning normally. A primary condition of perfect .health is that not most but all organs must function normally and perfectly

The advocates of religious pluralism, on the basis of the contention that most religions contain elements of truth and no religion the entire truth, preach religious complaisance. Such complaisance may serve the worthy purpose of religious tolerance but does no service to religious truth. If religiosity in the highest sense is the passion for unadulterated truth in its totality and entirety, its purpose is

p: ۴

by no means served by subjective and egocentric criteria, and the terms like ."satisfaction" and "meaning" fall short of desired objective

In this light one may say that for Watt the truth of religion is established statistically. With reference to Islam and Christianity he says: "In the particular cases of Islam and Christianity to say that they are verified in general implies accepting their central .(doctrines as true" (p. ۲۲

These words, surprisingly similar to the definition of the `verification theory of meaning' of the modern logical positivists, reveal Watt's inclination towards .positivistic empirical approach to religion

However, Watt is conscious of the difficulties of reconciliation between the two sets of doctrines, when he says "Also included among the doctrines to be accepted because of this verification must be the Islamic doctrine of the Prophethood of Muhammad (saws) and the Christian doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus. Superficially neither of these is acceptable to the other religion but, when the doctrines are looked at more closely, the reader will probably find that the divergences are lesser than they (appeared at first sight".(p. ٢٣

Watt proposes to bridge this doctrinal gap (a bridging which apparently amounts to making Muslims believe in the divinity of Jesus and inducing the Christians to agree to recognize Muhammad (saws) as a true prophet, which in turn amounts to negation of Christ's divinity) by undertaking an aerial journey over the chasm on the magic carpet .of his abstract analysis of symbolic uses of language

Accordingly the next subheading in

p: ۵

this chapter is "Symbolic Language as an Expression of Reality." He goes about proving that symbolic usage of words is common in the language of daily use also, in science, as well as in poetry. It leads him to conclude that "the fact that in non…religious matters symbolic language does not imply unreality suggests that, the .(same should be true in religious assertions" (p. ٢٨

In the same chapter, while discussing symbolic uses in the Bible and the Qur'an, he refers to the issue of the use of anthropomorphic terms in the Qur'an with relation to God. After mentioning the stand of Sunni theologians that "the anthropomorphic terms applied to God were to be understood bi…la kayf, `without (specifying) how' or `amodally', that is, without asking whether they were literal or metaphorical," concludes that "this is an entirely rational approach to the problem, and one of great

.(subtlety this attitude might be called one of `sophisticated naivety' "(p. ٣٠

Watt is aware that a similar kind of `sophisticated naivety' is required for belief in many Christian doctrines. An educates Westerner must perhaps have the satisfaction of being sophisticated at all costs. Watt does not notice that what he calls ".`sophisticated naivety is just an intellectual way of saying "shut up

Some knowledge of Shiite kalam might have saved him from much credulity in this regard Nevertheless, it is a pity that a learned defendant of religion like Wati should be so ever ready to bargain healthy rationality for any kind

.'of `naivety', no matter how much its `sophistication

Furthermore, it does not suit the purpose of a world…view, in the words of Watt, as a "total view of reality" into which must "fit all the truth in the various sciences. Watt does not seem to have understood well the spiritual meaning or function of prayer when he carelessly remarks that "Many Christians, I believe, show this sophisticated .(naivety when they engage in prayer (p. ٣١

Muslims also pray, and perhaps as naively according to Watt. Though he needs not mention them and is careful to avoid any possible misunderstandings in the interest of the dialogue the praying Christian, he seems to guess, will not take offence at .'`naivety' as long as it is accompanied with `sophistication

A Discussion on the Assumptions of Scientism

:The rest of the chapter is devoted to refutation of some assumptions of scientism

.That the objects studied by the sciences are the sole reality .١

.That the account of the original form of a thing shows what it really is .٢

.(That analysis of a thing into parts shows what it really is" (p. ٣١ ٣

Watt, wisely without going into philosophical abstrusities, points out that there is more

to reality than atoms and molecules. He points out the extreme complexity if not the utter absurdity of any attempt to reduce such statements as `Alan kicked the goal .which won the cup for the Blues' into its physio chemical constituents

His healthy common…sense, which is unaffected by any philosophical or scientific myopia, allows him to conclude

without wasting time or ink that "meanings are just as real as molecules, since they ".are part of the reality in response to which we act

With a lesser dexterity he disposes of the reductionist fallacy of trying to assess things by their origins: "The philosophy of a great thinker is not just the intellectual outpourings of a neurotic child, but has to be judged by the philosophical quality of his .(mature publications and not by his infantile tendencies" (p. ٣٧

Of course, Mr. Watt is not implying that the thought of lesser thinkers may be judged that way. At the end of the chapter he deals with the "serious and difficult question of the relationship of living things and human beings in particular to the physio…chemical basis of their life." However, "in this somewhat technical matter it seems best" for him "not to attempt any independent discussion." Accordingly, he resorts to quotations from Polanyi to prove his belief in "the rule that in normal functioning the higher ".controls the lower

With reference to the Gestalt theory which suggests an alternative opposed to that of reductionism, he points out that "different patterns may be found in the same complex object." Unexpectedly, this matter is related by him to the issue of religious ,pluralism (and later in the book to historiography) to speculate that

At some primitive period people in a certain region of the earth discovered certain patterns in the world around them, and made use of these patterns in working

out a general world…view. In other regions other people used slightly different patterns. In the course of time the great world religions worked out their world…views in terms of different categories of fundamental patterns; and this makes (communication and `dialogue' between them a matter of great difficulty”. (p. ۴۲

One wonders about the role of God in the midst of this religious chaos. The textual criticism of the Bible may have forced many Christians to adopt a humble opinion of their scriptures; but it is less than humility to expect others, the Muslims in this case, .to participate in the chorus of the advocates of pluralism

For the Muslim the diversity of religions is not derived from discovery or evolution of patterns by peoples in various regions of the world but from men's insolence against :one another. The path of God is not a network of zigzags but a straight path

Mankind were one nation, and God sent unto them prophets as bearers of good tidings and as warners, and He sent down with them the Scripture with the truth, that .it might judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differed concerning it

And only those unto whom (the Scripture) was given differed concerning it, after clear proofs had come unto them, being insolent one to another. Then God guided those who believed to the Truth, touching which they were at variance, by His leave; and (God guides whomsoever He will to a straight path. (۲:۲۱۳

Common Points: Islam and Christianity

The author devotes the six remaining chapters

p: ۹

of the book to a study of some common points between Islam and Christianity. They are “The Names and Attributes of God;” “Scripture as the Word of God;” “God the Creator;” “God as the Lord of History;” and “Humanity in Relation to God.” In “The .”Names and Attributes of God

Watt remarks that “to say that Muslims worship Allah and Christians worship God is

like saying that the Germans worship Gott and the French Dieu." He points out that "there are several million Arabic speaking Christians in Egypt, the Lebanon and elsewhere who have no other word for God than Allah." Though the theological conceptions of God differ between Jews, Muslims and Christians, "worship and service is a relation to a Being, not to a conception; and Jews, Christians and Muslims, (though their conceptions differ, worship the same Being".(p. ۴۶

We may admit what Watt says only with certain qualifications. Firstly, there are two concepts involved in the idea `worship of God.' The Muslims differ with the Christians not only in the conception of `God' (which includes the ideas of Trinity, incarnation and divinity of Christ), but also in the conception of what constitutes `worship'. The Arabic verbs `abada, ya'budu, and the noun `ibadah for worship, are used in the .Qur'an in the sense of service

Though God is the Lord, the Master and Sustainer (al...Rabb) of all creatures and they are His `ibad (slaves, servants, creatures), the good servants of God, the `ibad Allah proper, are referred to with additional epithets

p: ۱۰

such as mu'minun (believing), mukhlisun (sincere), salihun (righteous), shakur (grateful), munib (penitent), or simply as 'ibadi (My servants) in the Qur'an. Therefore, `ibadah or `worship' is man's service of God as his Master and Lord, and includes the .idea of obedience

The English term `worship' conveys only a devotional sense, and does not imply obedience to God's legal and ethical commands. It is, moreover, in the sense of service not merely of devotion that the Qur'an prohibits the `ibadah of the Satan (۳۶:۶۰) or the Non...God or taghut (۳۹:۱۷), where it is entirely independent of the .ritualistic sense of devotion

The Christian `service' is also loaded with ritualistic and devotional connotation. Therefore, to say that all who believe in God is the common religious sense or worship him in the sense of prayer and devotional rituals do not necessarily do the `ibadah of

God, in the Islamic sense. `Ibadah refers to the realization of the `abd…Rabb, .(slave…Master, servantLord) relationship in one's life

Therefore, in the Islamic sense a `worshipper' of God is one who serves Him and obeys Him and carries out His Will as given through the revelation. Accordingly, it is highly inaccurate to say that Jews, Christians and Muslims "worship the same God." The expression can be accepted only as a very crude approximation on the level of daily usage. The best way out seems to be that we may continue to use the terms `God' and `worship' for `Allah' and "ibadah' and leave it to God to

.judge who worships Him in actuality and how well

In the same chapter while discussing the "Oneness or Unicity" of God, Watt remarks. Christians also believe in the unicity of God [not the unity], one of their main statements of belief, the Nicene Creed, opening with the words, `I believe in one God.' At the same time, however, they also believe that God is in some way threefold. The doctrine of the Trinity, as it is called, is subtle and abstruse, and most ordinary (Christians simply accept it without being able to explain it fully". (p. ۴۹

The doctrine of the Trinity is a necessary corollary of the belief in divinity of Christ and the Holy Ghost. Of the two only divinity of Christ is of greater emotional and doctrinal significance for the Christians. Islam rejects incarnation, whether in the case of Jesus or someone else. The Creator cannot be incarnated in a creature, though all creatures .manifest His Creativity, Mastery and Sovereignty

According to Islam, the Essence of God is free of distinctions and divisions. It is, from the Islamic viewpoint, no more than play of words to say that most Christians believe in three hypostases in the Divine Essence not three separate divine entities. It does not matter whether three different things are packed separately on the level of .'conception as `gods,' or whether all three are put inside one package labelled `God

As long as we have a Son distinct from the Father as two different essences with a

peculiar relationship, the unity of or the unicity of Godhead is like an external and conventional unity of a triumvirate, not an internal and essential unity. Moreover, the New Testaments, while they clearly support the idea of Christ's incarnation, also strongly imply that the `Father' is somewhat more divine than the `Son', who says to the former `yet not what I want, but what you want' (Matthew ٢٧).

The Father has greater authority and in fact he is more often referred to as being the `God' who sent `his only Son' into the world to forgive sins of men. The doctrine of Trinity was framed after the belief in Christ's incarnation had become fixed among a large group of Christians. The Church had to shield itself from the blames of polytheism while preserving the divinity of Christ intact, hence the `sophisticated incoherence' of the Nicene Creed.

But the belief in Christ being the Son of God had become so prevalent in Christendom, and Christianity had become so irrevocably saddled with the idea of his divinity that the doctrine of three hypostases (lit. substances) was the best that theological expertise could achieve.

There is some `sophisticated naivety' in this statement of Watt when he says, It is commonly thought that the Qur'an criticizes the doctrine of the Trinity, but this is not necessarily so. Any statement about the matter requires to be carefully qualified.

One of the verses dealing with the points is ٥:٧٣ "Disbelieved have those who say God is the

third of three, there is no deity except one deity" Taken literally this verse is criticizing belief in three gods, not in three hypostases, and from a Christian point of view belief in three gods is a heresy, tritheism.

Throughout the centuries there have probably been simple minded and badly instructed Christians whose effective belief may in fact have been tritheism, and

there may well have been some such people in Arabia in Muhammad's times. In so far as this is so and the Qur’an is attacking tritheism, it is attacking a Christian heresy and .(orthodox Christians would agree with its criticisms (p. ۵۰

Watt here has tried to cast doubt on the Qur’anic disapproval of the doctrine of Trinity. However, even if it were possible to cast (though unjustifiably) any doubt on the Qur’an's rejection of Trinity, it is impossible to question the Qur’an's repeated rejection of the divinity of Christ and his incarnation (see the Qur’an, ۴:۱۷۲, ۵:۱۷, ۵:۷۲, .(۵:۷۵, ۹:۳۰ , ۳:۵۹, ۴:۱۷۱, ۵:۱۱۶

Moreover, if we view the Old Testaments, the New Testaments and the Qur’an as scriptures related to one religious tradition (which Watt is inclined to admit), it is somewhat difficult to accept that God should have maintained complete silence about a Son for two thousand years ago in the first instance, and again forgets that He had .sent His son into the world six hundred years after sending him

It is somewhat difficult to accept that God should have stressed upon His Unity in His

p: ۱۴

teachings conveyed to all Prophets from Noah to Abraham and up to Moses, and then from Moses to John the Baptist, and then should become a Trinity for some time, and .(then should disavow His Trinity in the Book revealed to Prophet Muhammad (saws

The Muslims may not but consider the Christian doctrine of Trinity but as a relapse into polytheism on the part of the Jewish and Non-Jewish followers of Christ. The Jews, as the Old Testament bears testimony, were prone to relapse into polytheism and idolatry throughout their national history. However the relatively firm establishment of monotheism by the time of Jesus precluded any overt regression .into idolatrous and polytheistic beliefs

Perhaps the limited polytheism disguised in the doctrine of Trinity was all that was possible for the polytheistic temperament to achieve within the monotheistic climate of the Hebrew culture, which was already subject to the stresses imposed by the

.pagan Romans' cultural, political, and religious influences

Watt is aware of the responsibility inherent in belief (p. ١٣٥), which is parallel or even prior to the responsibility for one's actions, and is upheld in the Islamic and Christian teachings. This is because our world…views, irrespective of whether we are theists or .atheists, play a fundamental role in the organization of our entire scheme of life

Beliefs are inherited by children from parents or "from the view of reality current in the social milieu," together with other behavioral patterns, and one is, therefore, responsible at least partially for how the

future generations shall believe, live and act. In order to judge any belief or act we must also take into consideration the consequences for the entire humanity if such a .belief were held and practised world…wide by all human beings

If one were to apply Watt's pragmatic criterion to the Christian belief in Trinity and speculate what would be the consequences for the entire mankind if the belief in the incarnation of Christ had not become prevalent among Christians belief which resulted, not to speak of the Jew's alienation from Christ, in the denial of the Prophethood of Muhammad (saws) by millions of human beings since the period following Christ to the present day, and deprived them of the spiritual, intellectual and moral benefits of Islam, not to speak about the centuries of distrust if not hostility it has caused between two major sections of mankind one may wonder about the contribution it might have made to the satisfactoriness of human life" on this planet. Perhaps it could have saved mankind from the crucial loss of meaning which has .assumed cosmic dimensions in the modern world for some decades

Attributes and Names of God

In the same chapter, while discussing the Attributes and Names of God, Watt remarks. So far as names and words go there would seem to be little difference between Islam and Christianity. Nevertheless, many Christians would claim that God .as conceived by Christians is more loving than God as conceived by Muslims

For Christians, He is not merely benevolent towards those who

p: ۱۶

obey and love Him, but He is like a shepherd who goes out to look for and rescue sheep that have gone astray. Many items of news in recent years have given Westerners the impression that Muslims are sterner and more rigorous in their punishment of offenders. Undoubtedly, however, there are many other Muslims (whose attitudes are much more liberal. (p. ۵۳

Watt's attitude is fairer than that of some Orientalists and scholars of Semitic religions who regard the Old Testament and the Qur'anic conceptions of God as being sterner or less loving than the Christian conception'. Watt is willing to admit that there is "little difference" between the Islamic and Christian conceptions "so far as names and ".'words go

However, there is something true in the statement that the Christian conception projects God as being more loving and lenient in comparison with the Jewish and Islamic notions. There are two reasons for this firstly, the emphasis on love, more than in the Gospels, is found in Paul's letters secondly, the absence of any system of .legislation in Christianity comparable to the Mosaic Law or the Islamic Shari'ah

God in the popular Christian conception is no more the authoritative lawgiver that He is in the Qur'an and the Torah. In the Christian conception, `one is put right with God' solely through faith in God and Jesus Christ. Voluntary morality substitutes the compulsory Divine Law. God, to Paul and his followers, no longer seems to make any :of the following demands

Whoever hits

p: ۱۷

his father or his mother is to be put to death. Whoever kidnaps a man, either to sell him or to keep him as a slave, is to be put to death. Whoever curses his father or his mother is to be put to death. Whenever a man gets angry and deliberately kills

another man, he is to be put to death, even if he has run to my altar of safety (Exodus ۲۱:۱۴_۱۷).

If a thief is caught breaking into a house at night and is killed, the one who killed him is not guilty of murder (Exodus ۲۲:۴). Put to death any woman who practices magic. Put to death any man who has sexual relations with an animal. Condemn to death anyone who offers sacrifices to any god except me, the Lord (Exodus ۲۲:۱۸_۲۰). If a man is caught having intercourse with another man's wife, both of them are to be put to death (Deut. ۲۲:۲۲). Whoever does not keep it (the Sabbath), but works on that day, is to be put to death (Exodus ۳۱:۱۴).

Similarly, Christianity is not `encumbered' with the laws regarding qisas, and hudud as in Islam. This banishment of Law from the predominant Christian religion which has survived until today, reduces God, na'udhu billdh, to an easygoing, indulgent and negligent sovereign who is no longer bothered about how men may regulate their lives and social affairs, as long as they have faith in Him and His Son, whose death on the cross exempts the

believers from the jurisdiction of the earlier Law given to Moses.

To the Muslim it appears that the Christian or rather the Pauline emphasis on love is a plea to compensate the guilt caused by the rejection of Mosaic Law in the interest of Paul's ambition for proselyting among the Gentiles. The Mosaic Law, with its all _ embracing nature covering all the individual and social affairs, would have reduced the acceptability of the Christian doctrine for the Gentiles used to liberal life styles.

Watt is referring to the much publicized cases of implementation of the Islamic penal laws in the latter part of his above quoted statement. When he refers to the "many other Muslims whose attitudes are much more liberal", he is indeed referring to the "moderate" Muslims who, like Paul, consider religion as voluntary ethics and a matter of individual's inner faith that would not tolerate the Law of the Shari'ah to invade all spheres of individual and social life.

While they are delighted with the abstract idea of loving Gad and all mankind and the rest of creation, they are put off by any suggestion that God should be obeyed (at least as much as their office's regulations or the traffic rules) and not merely loved. They are liberal indeed in the sense that they liberally appropriate all control over their individual lives or the affairs of the society to themselves. Faith and love, they are convinced, are sufficient to satisfy and placate God, and compensate for their rejection

p: ۱۹

of the Law, without which, they are certain, it is possible to regulate individual life and '.socio…political affairs of their society ` satisfactorily

Actually in a sense Watt's present work is aimed to reassure and perhaps guide these Muslim liberals in the light of the Christian experience, as the note on the book's flap :candidly suggests

In the Islamic world today there are many liberal minded Muslims who feel threatened by their own fundamentalists, and who are likely to see in the positions .adopted and defended in this book a possible way forward for themselves

Scriptures as the Word of God

In the fourth chapter of the book "Scriptures as the Word of God", writing on the revealed law, Watt admits that "Jesus accepted the Mosaic Law" (p. ۷۲). In the same paragraph earlier, he somewhat misleadingly states that "Christians accepted the commands given by God to Moses, of which the main ones are those in the Ten ".Commandments

The Ten Commandments constitute a prelude to the detailed text of Mosaic Law as stated in several books of the Pentateuch. This statement may mislead many Muslim readers who are not well acquainted with the Christian attitude towards Mosaic Law. Watt, without making any reference to the obvious role of Paul and his followers in dissociating Christianity from the Mosaic Law, states

Unlike the early Muslims the early Christians did not constitute a political entity or .state, and so they had no responsibility for framing or administering laws

What they found, however, especially those of them who lived outside Palestine, was that

p: ٢٠

in the Roman Empire there was a system of law owing nothing to revelation, and yet .roughly in accordance with the ethic legal parts of the Mosaic Law

When the Roman Empire became officially Christian in the early fourth century, it already had a system of law which was in general acceptable to Christians, and there was no need to create a new system of law based solely on the Mosaic Law as modified by the teaching of Jesus. Living in the Roman Empire made it clear to Christians that sound human reason, apart from revelation, could reach a satisfactory .system of law

Thus in medieval Christendom and in modern Western Christendom until the present century, although the laws of the various states were expected to be in accordance with biblical teaching, it was not considered necessary to show how a particular law .(was derived from scriptural texts (p. ٧٣

The 'deliberate neglect of Mosaic Law by early Christianity, or rather the majority sects of Christians, contrasts sharply with the attitude of Jesus Christ himself who, in the words of Watt, "criticized certain aspects of its contemporary application, notably the attaching of great importance to ritual matters and the like and the comparative ".neglect of some of the main ethic Legal conceptions

The Gospel of Matthew reports about Jesus' attack on the Hebrew teachers of the Law for their hypocrisy. In the course of his discourse, Jesus says, you hypocrites! You give to God a tenth even of the seasoning herbs, such

p: ٢١

as mint, dill, and cumin, but you neglect to obey the really important teachings of the Law, such as justice and mercy and honesty. These you should practice, without (neglecting the others. (Matthew ۲۳:۲۳

Jesus attacks the partial and selective practice of the Law by the Jewish priests, who ignored the teachings of paramount social significance such as justice, honesty and mercy. His words are comparable to a similar condemnation of the ahl al…hitdb, the Jews in particular, by the Qur’an

What, do you believe in part of the Book, and disbelieve in part? What shall be the recompense of those of you who do that, but degradation in the present life, and on (the Day of Resurrection to be returned unto the most terrible chastisement? (۲:۸۵

If, according to Watt, the Christians “did not constitute a political entity or state” in the beginning, neither did the Non…Christian Jews, who were politically and culturally under the Roman domination. It is much of naivety on the part of Watt to expect the reader to be gullible enough to believe that “within the Roman empire there was a ”.system of law roughly in accordance with the ethic legal parts of the Mosaic Law

The fact is that Christianity was so much liberalized and secularized by the… third century by its predominant sect as is the case today with the `Islam' of the Westernized Muslim intelligentsia and statesmen and so much cut off from the practice of the Mosaic Law that it did not matter how

p: ۲۲

.roughly the Roman law agreed with the law given by God to Moses

The Christians readily adopted the ways of Roman society and “when the Roman Empire became officially Christian in the early fourth century, it already had a system of law which was in general acceptable to Christians end there was no need to create ”.a new system of law based on the Mosaic Law

The Sunni and Shah Jurists accept, with some difference, the role of reason in derivation 'of the `rules `of the Shari'ah, but to consider reason as a substitute for

revelation (or as Watt cleverly states, "as a source parallel to revelation") would be a flagrant infringement of the explicit text of the Qur'an

And whoever does not give a ruling according to what God has revealed they are the (unbelievers. (۵:۴۴

It is not for any believer, man or woman, 'When God and His Messenger have decreed a matter, to have the choice in their affair. Whosoever disobeys God and His (Messenger has gone astray in manifest error. (۳۳:۳۶

Reason in Islamic jurisprudence is usually applied as a tool only in no case considered to be parallel to the Qur'an and the Sunnah. Only when there is no guide...line offered by the Qur'an and the Sunnah the reason can assume an independent parallel role. Such instances are neutral to the Shari'ah. It would be naivety to expect the Islamic jurist worth his name to take the Shari'ah as lightly and nonchalantly as Pauline .Christianity treated the Mosaic Law

In Islam, legislation of any laws conflicting with the Shari'ah is a kind of apostasy and shirk (polytheism). It is this kind of departure from the revealed law on behalf of the Jewish doctors and Christian priesthood that the Qur'an disapproves in the following :verse, likening their behavior to polytheism

They (the Jews and the Christians) have taken their rabbis and their monks as lords (apart from God. (۹:۳۱

Watt knows well this difference between Muslim and Christian attitudes, as he remarks, The contrast between the Islamic belief that all laws should be based, on God's commands and the Christian readiness to accept sound human reason as a source of law parallel to revelation is one of the greatest differences between the two religions, and raises the question whether in' the future it will be possible for Muslims to cooperate in the field of law with Christians; or at least to have some degree of ('mutual understanding (p۷۴

However, no man of sound reason, who has also read the Pentateuch, will accept Watt's remark which indirectly casts doubts upon the death penalties legislated in the .Mosaic Law

Even if it is accepted that the commands are God's commands, it is proper to ask whether human beings have correctly understood the fundamental principles implicit in them. One of the Ten Commandments is `you shall not kill', and this may be said to inculcate the fundamental principle of `respect for life'. What may be asked, however, .is whether this command forbids the judicial execution of criminals

p: ۲۴

For nearly twenty centuries most Christians have agreed that it does not; but that (appears to be a human interpretation of the command. (p. ۷۶

Watt's attitude exemplifies the nonchalant attitude of most Christians towards the revelation and the Law of the Old Testaments, an attitude which may not be emulated .by any Muslim jurisprudent

In general, the Christian scholars of Islam have striven to diminish the Muslim's respect for his law and scriptures. Under the heading "The human element in revelation," Watt takes some pains to prove that there is `some human element' also .in the Qur'an

While as a Christian he apparently believes that God may become incarnate in a man born of a woman, eat, drink, speak, move about and die, it is interesting to see him making the following remark about the Muslim belief that the Qur'an constitutes the speech of God. He says, there is something paradoxical in the idea that written or spoken words may be the word or speech of God. Because God is eternal and transcendent He can be known to man only in so far as He reveals Himself to man. (p. (۶۱

The textual criticism of the Bible has deflated the traditional Christian views about the `Divine' origin of the books of the Old and New Testaments. Some Western scholars

of Islam have also taken great pains to prove that discrepancies, as are replete in the Bible, exist also in the Holy Qur'an. Others have tried to call its literary excellence in question. Arther

J. Arberry refers to the Qur'an's literary critics as men "ambitious to measure the ".ocean of prophetic eloquence with the thimble of pedestrian analysis

One of the allegations made by such critics has been in relation to the Qur'anic story of Mary, Jesus' mother, in which she is addressed reproachfully as `sister of Aaron' (۱۹:۲۸) by the people who accuse her of adultery. The critics allege that the Qur'an confuses between Mary, Jesus' mother, and the sister of Aaron, Moses' brother, of .the same name

The Qur'an is perfectly clear about its historical perspective from Noah to Abraham, from Abraham to Moses, and from Moses to the time of Christ. This fact is obvious to any reader of the Qur'an. It is nothing less than deliberate malice on the Orientalists' part to make such absurd allegations against the Qur'an. Also, it is naivety on Watt's behalf to use it to inculcate doubt about the irrefutably firm Islamic belief born out by .'the Qur'an and reliable hadith that Jesus did not die upon the cross

This is what Watt says, There is a slight mathematical mistake in the Bible, where it speaks of a large circular basin, called a `sea' which is ten cubits across and thirty cubits round (۲ Chronicles ۴.۲) actually a circle which is ten units in diameter has a .circumference of over thirty one units

Presumably the people for whom this was written were accustomed to work with this low degree of accuracy, and it was not part

of the purpose of scripture to change their outlook in such matters. In similar fashion, some of the verses in which Western scholars have alleged that the Qur'an has made mistakes, should be regarded as being expressed in terms of mistaken views current

.among the people of Mecca and Medina

Examples are the address to Mary, mother of Jesus, as `sister of Aaron', and the apparent denial of the crucifixion of Jesus (۴:۱۵۷). It is probable that there were people in Arabia who had such ideas, and it was not part of the purpose of revelation to correct them. With regard to the crucifixion it is known that there were certain Christian heretics, called Gnostics, who denied that Jesus died on the cross. The primary purpose of S. ۴:۱۵۷ appears to be not to deny the death as such, but to deny that the bringing about of his death by the Jews was triumph for them (a point with .(which Christians could agree). (p. ۶۳

God The Creator

In the fifth chapter entitled "God the Creator", Watt deals with the belief that God is the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, and handles the `not easy task' of understanding it `in the light of what we know about the universe.' Since there is no established or even emergent cosmology capable of reconciling religious beliefs about the relation of God to the universe with the results of science, he takes upon himself the task of providing "the rudiments of a philosophical cosmology by drawing on ideas

.(from such thinkers as Polanyi and Teilhard de Chardin" (p. ۷۹

He implicitly accepts the Marxian views on the relation of the individual to society and holds that "persons cannot be persons except through and in a society, they cannot act except in accordance with the meanings implicit in the world…view of the society." Accordingly, Watt's generous attempt to provide Christians and Muslims with a philosophical cosmology is also based firmly upon the secular Western world view .which he shares with other Westerners

For him the unity of the human race is a potential unity `and that this unity is in the process of being realized' presumably through world…wide acceptance of the secular Western world…view, which according to him "is bound to be universally accepted

before long by all educated persons." (p. ٨٣) Watt despite his earlier feeble protest against scientism is, visibly, perfectly at home with the secular Western world…view and his suggested cosmology which deals with religious conceptions is aimed at proposing only minor modifications to it so as to incorporate religious beliefs in the .secular world outlook

In this cosmological scheme, God is an `orientation' in matter which, if we may say, develops in an evolutionary fashion from the simplicity of the `geosphere' and ` biosphere' to the complexities of the nousphere' and `theiosphere'. God is reduced in it, though implicitly, to a mode of matter. Watt only vaguely understands the mathematical notion of boundary conditions or constraints, and follows Polanyi in the claim that "higher level entities

".somehow impose boundary conditions on lower level entities

In his suggested cosmology, the cosmic process is controlled by (a) setting of boundary conditions, and (b) the presence in matter of an orientation, also spoken of as `radial energy' [a concept taken from Teilhard]. The suggestion that first springs to mind is that it is God who sets the boundary conditions, and He is somewhat identified (with the orientation in matter, or at least works through it. (p. ٩٣

To say that it is God who sets the boundary conditions for the universe [presumably its laws] and who is present in the constituents of the universe as an orientation (covers the main assertions of the scriptures. (p. ٩۴

God's immanence and His transcendence are reduced to two different modes of matter, the boundary conditions might be described as the more explicit and external form of the implicit and internal orientation. As applied to God, this latter symbol .expresses His immanence, the other His transcendence

Watt's metaphysics makes theology an appendage of physics and biology, and incorporates God into the universe with results not much different from Spinozistic

pantheism. But how is a believer in the God of the scriptures to react to this inane and abstract conception of the Deity rehabilitated in the secular Western world…view? Watt anticipates the question and readily prescribes `sophisticated naivety' once .again

The devout believer may well ask, how can I worship an orientation or a setter of boundary conditions? The question is a perfectly proper one, and the answer

p: ۲۹

is simple. The believer must keep in mind what has already been said about `sophisticated naivety'. By all means he may indeed go on using the familiar scriptural terms with naive simplicity [i.e. God and Creator for Orientation and Setter (of boundary conditions]. (p. ۹۵

He accepts evolution, namely, that "Homo sapiens are descended from `lower' forms of life," as a scientific fact, man being the best result so far obtained by the :'`orientation

Certainly God created man, but has brought him into existence by controlling the direction of the evolutionary process. God is not to be thought of as having had some kind of blueprint of human nature; rather humanity is the highest example so far of (that towards which the immanent orientation is tending. (p. ۹۵

Since there is no room in the Western secular world…view for miracles and God's `interference with the laws of nature,' Watt tries to explain away biblical miracles related to Noah, Moses, Joshua, and Jesus as allegories, imitations of earlier `models' .or imaginative distortions of perfectly natural events

The story of Adam and Eve, since it does not fit with the theory of evolution, is for him a "folk…myth". The Virgin Birth of Jesus and his resurrection, though posing difficulty to the modern Christian believer, are "to be accepted with sophisticated naivety as containing symbolic truth." For Watt `symbolic interpretation' is a cure all, a magic lamp by which all scriptural afflictions are healed, theological knots are untied, and

doctrinal pitfalls are safely left behind

p: ٣٠

.one's back. This can be noticed throughout the book

Though God does not permit miracles, He may, arrange things in a way that the believers are naturally helped and disbelievers destroyed. Here is a wise explanation :which also does not tax secular imagination

Although God cannot be said to interfere with the laws governing natural events, yet the total situation (including the characters of the human beings involved) may be such that certain events prove disastrous for unbelievers or, in other cases, advantageous for believers. Since God is ultimately behind everything, one is justified (in saying that He has helped the unbelievers and helped the believers. (p. ١١۶

God as the Lord of History

In the sixth chapter called "God as the Lord of History", Watt opens a very interesting discussion on the issue of sacral and secular views of history. Historical events, he explains, may be written about in several different ways, according to the interests of .the writer and of his potential readers

The essential work of the historian may be said to be to discover significant patterns in that great and complex chaos which is the course of events. Sacral history presents the course of events in the historical process as controlled by God. (p. ١٠۵) the secular historian is chiefly concerned with those patterns which we describe as political, economic, social and intellectual factors, and the like, whereas sacral history deals (with the patterns which are relevant to the Godward aspect of events. (p. ١١٠

But how does God control the course of history in the light

p: ٣١

of Watt's statement that `there is no overt interference with natural law' on His part? In addition to the `boundary conditions' and `inner orientation,' there are two other

:ways in which God may control events

He may initiate a series of events by `calling' individuals to undertake some task or (١) ;project, as He called Abraham, Moses and Muhammad

He may strengthen men to fight in battle and gain victory and to carry on in (٢) adverse circumstances, and conversely He may weaken the opponents of those He favours by causing them to lose confidence, to entertain false beliefs and the like. (p. (١٠٧

A prophet's consciousness of his prophetic mission is made to appear like a deep seated psychological compulsion, called by Watt `inner prompting', which "on the one hand constitutes an initiative by God, but on the other hand does not destroy or override a man's freedom since it is for him to decide whether to respond to the call or not, whether to follow the prompting or not." Watt forgets to mention the case of Jonah who had tried to escape the dictates of, what he would call, Jonah's `inner '.prompting

Watt has a characteristically Christian view of history which is divisible into secular and sacral compartments. This split view of reality is unacceptable to the Muslim, particularly the Shi'ahs, for whom not only two different views of history characterized as sacral and secular are unacceptable, but also there cannot be more .than one sacral historical perspective for all mankind

Man, according to Islam, is a sacral creature. The purpose of his creation and life are intrinsically sacral

(I have not created the jinn and mankind except to serve Me. (٥١:٥۶

The creation of Adam was realization of a sacral Divine plan, the wisdom of which even the angels could not readily see. They thought that man was unfit for the fulfillment of the sacral objective for which God wished to create him, and he would degrade himself to the level of the beast and cause corruption and bloodshed upon

'.the earth

The Qur’an views the entire history of humanity, the past and the future, in a single sacral perspective, as can be seen from the verse ۲:۲۱۳, quoted earlier and the .following verses

It is He Who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the religion of truth, that (He may uplift it above every religion, though the polytheists be averse. (۶۱:۹

(And there is not a nation but a warner has passed among them. (۳۵:۲۴

He has laid down for you as religion that He charged Noah with, and that We have revealed to thee [Muhammad] , and that We charged Abraham with, Moses and Jesus, [saying] “Establish the religion, and scatter not regarding it. They scattered not, (save after knowledge had come to them, being insolent one to another. (۴۲:۱۳...۱۴

The religion near God is Islam. Those who were given the Book were not at variance (except after knowledge came to them, being insolent one to another. (۳:۱۹

The Qur’an condemns the `chosen

p: ۳۳

people syndrome' of the Jews and the Christians, which led to an unreal partitioning of sacral histories as an incurable disease lasting until the Judgement Day, and warns .the Muslims against doing the same thing

The Jews say, `The Christians stand not on anything'; the Christians say, `The Jews stand not on anything'; yet they [both] recite the [same Divine] scriptures. So, too, the ignorant say the like of them. God shall decide between them on the Day of (Resurrection touching their differences. (۲:۱۱۳

And they say, `none shall enter Paradise except that they be Jews or Christians.' Such (are their fancies. Say: Produce your proof, if you speak truly.' (۲:۱۱۱

Be not as those who scattered and fell into variance after the clear signs came to

(them. (۳: ۱۰۵

And with those who say `We are Christians' we took compact; and they have forgotten a portion of that they were reminded of. So we have stirred up among them enmity and hatred, till the Day of Resurrection; and God will assuredly tell them of the (things they wrought. (۵:۱۴

So for their breaking their compact We cursed them (the children of Israel) and made their hearts hard, they pervert words from their meanings; and they have forgotten a (portion of that they were reminded of (۵:۱۳

In the above verses of the Qur’an, one can discern the emphasis on this point: the proneness of a people to distort their sacral perspective of history due to collective sinfulness, negligence, ambition, prejudice, and malice. The Qur’an

partially affirms the biblical sacral history, but it rejects the Jewish and Christian sacral .perspectives of the future as mass hallucinations

The development of secular history, from an Islamic viewpoint, is a result of blindness to the sacral pattern of life which envelops all aspects of life, ethical, social, political, economic, etc. Man's view of the past sacral history is internally distorted and clouded .by the accumulated prejudices of past generations

Divine revelation plays a role of an objective corrector of sacral perspective, as the Qur’an does in regard to history, the past and the future, for all nations of mankind. The Qur’an encourages human beings to view history in a sacral perspective with the help of the revealed truth, without which they can neither understand the past, the .present or the future

There is no place in it for the secular history which is an unrealistic, partial, and schizo- phrenic picture of the past based on ignorance or neglect of the essentially sacral pattern of all reality. Secular history, therefore, may be compared to an attempt to explain psychological and biological phenomena in exclusive terms of chemical

.reactions

Moreover, the Qur’an offers certain general guide…lines for putting events in a correct .sacral historical perspective, as can be seen from the following verses

That is because God would never change His favour that He conferred on a people (until they changed what was in themselves. (٨:٥٣

(God changes not what is in a people, until they change what is in themselves. (١٣: ١١

Frequently the

p: ٣٥

Qur’an asks believers to undertake a study of the past peoples and civilizations and find out why some nations perished without a trace (٣:١٣٧, ١۶:٣۶, ٣٧:۶٩, ٣٠:۴٢). There are also frequent references to the unchangeable Sunnah of God governing the character .(and historical fate of nations (٣٣:۶٢, ٣۵:۴٣, ۴٠:٨۵, ۴٨:٢٣, and ١٧:٧٧

In all these verses, the Qur’an asks Muslims to develop a sacral view of the entire history of mankind, and reminds them that they are no exception to the Sunnah or the sacral laws which control the destiny of nations, and whose neglect caused many a .nation to perish without leaving any trace

In this fashion, the Qur’an lays the foundations of a sacral historiography of mankind, a subject which was paid some attention by Muslim historians,' who laid the foundation of a philosophical and sociological study of history, but unfortunately they could not make much advance in the direction of developing a specifically Qur’anic view of historiography in the strict sense of the term `sacral'. They actually .contributed to the development of modern secular outlook of history

Modern historiography owes much to Muslims but not …from the sacral viewpoint. Modern historians and archeologists who study the relics of past cultures approach the subject with a secular outlook, and, therefore, their research, though not entirely unproductive, fails to obtain desirable results. Also it suggests the role of revelation as

a corrector of sacral perspectives, as in the case of the Jewish and Christian sacral .histories

From an Islamic viewpoint, the Christendom, lacking

p: ۳۶

the proper sacral criteria necessary for viewing Post scriptural history in a proper perspective, and as it flourished in the cradle of Rome's pagan environment, had to accommodate considerably the secular or sacral view of social reality and history. The post scriptural Christianity gradually lost its sacral thread of history and could no .longer see a sacral pattern in the events

It seemed to ordinary Western Christian as if God no longer controlled the course of history and that it has lost sacral meaning for contemporary life. Didn't Nietzsche proclaim at the turn of the last century that "God is dead"? The Christian malaise also spread to the Muslim world and increasingly greater number of educated Muslims came to see the world and their own destiny through the Western made glasses of a .secular socio historical perspective

Perhaps among the Muslims the Shi'ah, more than other Muslims, have tended to see sacral patterns in historical events. The Shi'ah views the history of the Post Prophetic period in a different perspective. In this perspective there are some events which have great significance for the Shi'ah, which have lesser or no sacral significance for .most Sunni Muslims

One of those events is the martyrdom of Al…Imam Al…Husayn (as) and his relatives and companions in Karbala' in the year ۶۱ A. H. The same event is seen in an altogether different light by some Sunnis and most Western scholars of Islam, who, viewing it through the secular glasses, see in it no more than

p: ۳۷

.a ruler's response to a challenging rival

Of the contemporary events of significance in the Islamic sacral perspective are the revolution in Iran, the war imposed on the Islamic Republic by Iraq, and the Islamic resistance in Lebanon against the Zionist forces and their Western allies, especially the U.S. The occupation of the U.S. embassy at Tehran by the Muslim Students was another event, whose `sacral' significance for the Iranian Muslims perhaps went ”.unnoticed except by R.W. Carlsen in his books on that crisis

That the distortion of the sacral perspective may entail dangerous political results causing much conflict, turmoil and bloodshed is confirmed by the contemporary example of the formation of Israel. It would be interesting to apply the criteria of `satisfactory' results and `positive achievements' to the Zionist interpretation of the Jewish sacral history in the light of the decades of conflict and turmoil in the area and the exile, homelessness, oppression and bloodshed of Palestinian and Lebanese .Muslims at the hands of the Zionists

There are many other views expressed by Watt in this chapter, which, if critically examined, will require an entire book. For reasons of brevity we will refer only to one or two of these.” Watt briefly refers to what he calls `axes of anthropogenesis,' by ”.which is understood “the process by which people become thoroughly human

He confronts the stupendous claim of Teilhard de Chardin that “during historic time the principal axis of anthropogenesis has passed through the West” with the suggestion that there may have

p: ۳۸

been “other axes of anthropogenesis, at least in India and China, parallel to the Western or Christian axis.” However, with a mixture of Western pride and Christian generosity he adds that “there are some grounds for thinking that from about AD ۹۰۰ ”.to AD ۱۳۰۰ this axis swung away from the Christian West to the Islamic Middle East

From a purely Islamic viewpoint, anthropogenesis cannot be described on a regional or racial basis. From a spiritual viewpoint, according to Islam, God is the source of .anthropogenesis, and revelation is its means

O believers, respond to God and the Messenger when he calls you unto that which will give you life; and know that God stands between man and his heart, and that to Him (you shall be mustered. (۸:۲۴

However, if one were forced to identify a historical landmark in human history, there is the unique figure of Abraham, who through his whole hearted devotion to God changed the course of human history. The Qur'an refers to Abraham as hanif (۳:۶۷, ۳:۹۵. ۴:۱۲۵, ۱۶:۱۲۳), khalill (۴:۱۲۵), ummah (۱۶:۱۲۰), imam (۲:۱۲۴), and His chosen one (۳:۳۳), in whose descent God promised to bless all nations of mankind according to the Bible. If we may talk of an axis of anthropogenesis, here we may locate it, in the light of both .the Bible and the Qur'an

Humanity in Relation To God

In the book's seventh chapter "Humanity in Relation to God," Watt at length deliberates over the Muslim and Christian terms used for description of the relationship of human being with

p: ۳۹

God. Earlier we have referred to such terms as `abd (servant, slave, worshipper), and `ibadah (service, servitude, worship) used by the Qur'an, and saw that the two terms were interrelated. With reference to the issue of secular and sacral history we have quoted the Qur'anic verse ۵۱:۵۶, according to which `ibadah of God is the primary objective of the creation of human beings. Not only human beings, but all the beings in :the universe are `ibad or servants of God

None is there in the heavens and earth but he comes to the All merciful as a servant. ((۱۹:۹۳

Thus, `ibadah or service being the goal of all creation, it is quite fitting that human beings should be generally described as `ibad Allah, the `servants of God.' Let us see what Watt has to say on this point. At first he mentions the modern Western Christian's allergy towards the term `slave' "because of the connotations of the word ".in Western society since the sixteenth century

Here Watt may be referring to the Western experience of slavery which has left behind a deep sense of guilt embedded in the European and American White man's conscience, and which makes the term `slave' highly detestable. He points out that although the Islamic depiction of man's relationship with God by the term 'abd may "seem strange to the Western Christian, there is much in the Bible which is parallel to .it

When Abraham, Jacob, Moses, David and the prophets are referred to as `servants of the

Lord,' the word for `servant' is `ebed, which is the Hebrew equivalent of the Arabic ".'`abd and is often represented in the Septuagint by the Greek doulos, `slave

Watt, too, is not free of the Westerner's allergy to the word, for he considers the status of the `abd of God as something below human dignity, or at least improper to the contemporary man's sense of dignity. He remarks, "The chief way in which the modern Muslim rises above the status of slave is when he becomes God's agent or .steward in this world

In the Qur'an (۲:۳۰...۳۳) there is an account of how God informed the angels that He was about to establish Adam as His khalifah (successor, deputy) in the earth. In recent centuries, however, Muslims in general have come to interpret the passage about Adam as implying that God has given humanity a position of stewardship in His world. (In some respect this would seem to be an advance on the status of slave. (p. ۱۲۷

This `recent' ۱۲ improvement in the status of the Muslim from being `a slave of God' to His `deputy', as envisioned by Watt, does not help him in catching up with the Christian (Watt is not bothered with the Jew), who has been already the `son of God' :for nearly two thousand years for Watt further remarks that

In the New Testament the possibility is also presented of man rising above the status of slave to God [which he was throughout the era of

the Old Testaments, neglecting of course the presumptuous self promotion of the Jew to the status of `sonship', whom Watt quotes from John ۸:۴۱ as saying to Christ, "God Himself is the only father we have, and we are His true sons."], since it is repeatedly affirmed that the Christian believer has been raised to the status of `son'. The essential distinction seems to be that the slave or servant does not know what (the master is about, whereas the son does. (p. ۱۲۹

Watt agrees, therefore, that the modern Muslim's promotion (a rise of which the Muslim has become conscious, according to him, only lately, after nearly fourteen centuries after the Qur'an was revealed) to the place of God's deputy "at least slightly" raises him "above servile status, since one who acts for God as His `agent', or ".`steward' is more than a mere slave

Watt goes on to imply that the Qur'an's rejection of God's having sons or daughters was perhaps due to the lack of training on the part of the Prophet's contemporaries in the symbolic uses of language, `sophisticated naivety' being, of course, a later invention. In another remark which is obliquely aimed to insinuate `the presence of :human element' in the Qur'an, he speculates

As is well known, the Qur'an denies the possibility of God having sons and daughters (۶:۱۰۰, etc.), and this applies both to pagan beliefs and to Christian belief about Jesus. Presumably the Qur'an made these assertions because many of Muhammad's contemporaries understood these terms

.literally

The Qur'an, contrary to what Watt imagines, perfectly knows what it is talking about and what the Christians and the Jews believed. It rebukes all attempts to claim any special proximity and relationship with Him, which in reality boils down to a claim of inherent superiority over other human beings. The `sonship' complex like the

`chosen people' theory, according to the Qur’an, is rooted not in spirituality but in .communal and national pride

The Qur’an carefully avoids any vocabulary which may become the cause of such collective afflictions as pride and prejudice, such as afflicted the Jews in Christ's time, to whose claim that “we are God's true sons,” Jesus replies, “If God really were your .father, you would love me, because I came from God and now I am here

You are the children of your father, the Devil, and you want to follow your father's desires.” (John ۸:۴۲…۴۴) It is not logical to assume that Jesus would sanction for his followers a vocabulary which he condemns the Jews for using, because to permit the Christians to consider themselves the `sons of God' would be equivalent to exposing them to the same kind of dangers of spiritual prejudice and blindness which afflicted .the Jews who opposed Jesus

In any case, even if the `son…father' terminology were considered to be a permissible substitute for the `abd…Rabb terminology used by the Qur’an for true believers, it cannot be applicable indiscriminately to any group of a religious community, whether Jew, Christian, or Muslim, which

includes all kinds of good and bad people, from the time of Moses to the present. The Qur’an rejects such supercilious claims made by the Jews and Christians in these :words

The Jews and Christians say, `We are the sons of God, and His beloved ones.' Say `Why then does He chastise you for your sins? No; you are men of His creation [like (other human beings] He forgives whom He will, and He chastises whom He will.' (۵:۱۸

The Qur’an refrains from using anthropomorphic terms in relation to God…man relationship, which may be adversely misinterpreted, especially when they have connotations related with biological relationships among members of a species. The `Father…Son' relation when applied to God with regard to Jesus, one of His eminent

prophets according to Islam, perhaps led the early Christians to interpret God and Jesus as members of one species, sharing the same specific characteristic, namely, .divinity

Probably the early Christian usage of the Father…Son allegory was derived from the Jewish people's earlier eschatological hopes of a king in David's lineage “who would break the nations of the whole earth with an iron rod; and shatter them in pieces like a clay pot,” (Psalms ۲:۸…۹) which either represented the impotent agony of a people in political slavery or exile or the imperialist fantasies of a nation clothed in a sacral and .religious form

When Jesus appeared, he became the focus of all the high hopes of the Jews. They saw in him, “the Lord” of Psalms ۱۱۰, “who

p: ۴۴

sat at the right hand of God,” under whose feet God would put his enemies, the “greatest king” and the `first…son' of Psalms ۸۹ who says to God, “You are my father and my God,” and the “son of David” of ۲ Samuel ۷, where God i: alleged to have told David, “When you die and are buried with your ancestors, I will make one of your sons king and keep his kingdom strong. He will be one to build a temple for me, and I will make sure that his dynasty continues for ever. I will be his father, and he will be my ”.son

Watt presumes that the Qur’an rejects the `Sonship' of Christ because many of the Prophet's contemporaries understood these terms literally. This is a usual plea put forth by Christian writers. First of all there is little in the Gospels which precludes the notion that Christ was not regarded as the `Son of God' in the literal sense at least by a large group of early Christians of the era in which the Gospels were written. In the ,(letter of Paul to, the Galatians (۴:۴

Paul refers to Jesus as “God's own son:” There is no indication that the word is used in a metaphorical sense, at least for Christ, who is also referred to elsewhere as God's first…born. The idea of sonship by procreation is not refuted explicitly by the New

Testaments. Secondly, it is sonship in the non…literal sense, also, that the Qur'an refutes at

.(several places (۲:۱۱۶, ۱۰:۶۸, ۱۸:۴; ۱۹:۸۸, ۲۳:۹۱, ۷۲:۳

The verb used to state that God has not taken (or adopted) anyone as a `son' is ittakhadha, which expressly implies that God does not adopt any sons, either in the literal or symbolic or metaphorical sense. Thirdly, there are strong reasons for assuming that the `Sonship' of Christ is something more than symbolic for Christians, for it carries the idea, if not of procreation, at least of belonging to the same genera or species, as is true of all fathers and sons, and in this case that species is represented '.by `divinity

The latent Christian thinking can be put in a syllogistic form: (۱) All fathers and sons belong to the same species; (۲) Christ is the `Son' of a/the Deity; (۳) Christ is also divine. Both the minor premise and conclusion of the implicitly polytheistic syllogism :are refuted by the Qur'an

(God has not taken to Himself any son, nor is there any god with Him (۲۳:۹۱

Though at certain places in the New Testament it is stated that the `Son' is the same as God (John ۱:۱, ۱۰:۳۰), at other places it is also made obvious that the `Son' may die (something impossible to assert or even imagine about the Father), and once dead is powerless to rise again, as Paul states in his letter to the Romans (۶:۴) "Christ was raised from death by the glorious power of the Father" From the viewpoint of a Muslim, the Christian doctrine probably

became a prey to the political fantasies of Jewish scribes who wrote them back into .their books

Such fantasies formed the groundwork for the political hopes of the Jewish

community throughout the five to seven hundred years that elapsed between the fall of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and the appearance of Jesus. They find obvious reflection in this statement from Luke (۱:۳۲-۳۳) where it is said of Jesus that "he will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High God. The Lord will make him a king, as his ancestor David was and he will be the king of the descendants of Jacob for ".ever; his kingdom will never end

Obviously Jesus never became a king "as his ancestor David was." However, despite it, for those who believed him as a prophet, he continued to remain the "Son of the Most High God" -a belief which found further encouragement in the many miracles of .Jesus and the later belief in his resurrection

The terms `king' and `son of God' had, before Christ, come to be inextricably coupled together in the Jewish imagination, as can be seen in the exclamatory statement of Nathanael who, before meeting Jesus, had been told by Philip, Jesus' disciple, "We have found the one whom Moses wrote about in the book of the Law and whom the prophets also wrote about "(John ۱:۴۵). On meeting Jesus, Nathanael is reported to have said to Christ "Teacher, you are the Son of God! You

"!are the King of Israel

Evidently Nathanael's remark was a product of his Jewish religious background, for about him Jesus says "Here is a real Israelite" [i.e. a real Jew] (John ۱:۴۷). Obviously, to Nathanael, one brought up in the Jewish monotheistic tradition, the term `son of God' could not have signified the divinity of Christ, as it did for many Christians later. `Son of God' most probably meant to him the privileged station of the Israeli king puffed up by Jewish nationalistic hopes. However, the Jewish political hopes were not realized in .Jesus

Though it became difficult to call him the `King of the Jews,' he remained for some Jews who embraced Christianity the `son who sat at the Father's right hand'. Still some others clung to a hope in the `Kingdom of God,' which in the Islamic terms could

have meant the `Hereafter,' though for many of the Christians it continued to signify .a terrestrial kingdom

The Christian conception of `sonship' as a higher status seems to be derived from the arguments used by Paul to overthrow the `burden' of Mosaic Law. Paul, on his own authority, argues that Mosaic Law was for `slaves,' then “God sent his own Son ... to redeem those who were under the Law, so that we might become God's sons” .((Galatians ۴:۳...۵

Elsewhere, he warns the converted Jews who entertained scruples about the retention of the Mosaic Law in these words: “Freedom is what we have Christ has set us free! Stand, then, as

.(free people, and do not allow yourselves to become slaves again” (Galatians ۵:۱

From the Islamic viewpoint Paul had no authority to abrogate the Mosaic Law. For such an important step he should have had besides his own ingenuous arguments some textual authority from Jesus himself. This he never cites, nor claims that Jesus had recommended such a step. All that motivates him in this respect is a proselytizer's .zeal

Discussing the problem of retention or rejection of the Mosaic Law with Christ's apostles; who were all of Jewish background, he tells them, “My brothers, you know that a long time ago God chose me from among you to preach the Good News to the Gentiles, so that they could hear the believes. Why do you want to put God to test by laying a load on the backs of the [new] believers which neither our ancestors nor we (ourselves were able to carry [being born Jews]?” (Acts ۱۵:۷...۱۰

Thus we see that the idea of `sonship' in Christianity is connected on the one hand with the religio political fantasies of the Jews and on the other with the need felt by early Christian leaders to liberalize the faith by downplaying the significance of the Mosaic Law (Acts ۱۵:۱۹). What we have stated here is irrefutably supported by the

.Christian scriptures

In Islam (i.e. in the Islamic doctrine, not the Muslim history), on the other hand, the racial or communal prejudices and ambitions of the Arabs did not play any part

whatsoever. The Qur’an declares that no individual, nation or community has any special relationship with God. All are His servants and creatures. Jesus though a great prophet is still a creature, a servant, and a slave of God; he will not disdain to be God's :servant

O mankind! We have created you male and female, and have made you nations and tribes, that you may know one another. Certainly, the noblest of you, in the sight of (Allah is the most pious among you. (۴۹:۱۳

.This verse does not address itself only to the Muslims but to all mankind in general

The Messiah (Christ) will not disdain to be a servant (`abd) of God, neither the angels (who are near...stationed to Him (۴:۱۷۲

The term abd is used in the Qur’an in two meanings, such as our use of the word `human' for all human beings and for good people in particular. Although potentially every man is an `abd or slave of God, only those who have served God as He should be served, becoming selfless instruments of the Divine Will, really deserve to be called `ibad. Though all are potentially `ibad, only those who are servants par excellence .really deserved to be called `ibad

That is, a potential `abd becomes a real `abd through `ibadah, the worship and service of God. Only then he is fit to join the heavenly community of God's servants '....what Watt erroneously calls the `theiosphere

O soul at peace, return unto thy Lord, well pleased, well pleasing! Enter thou

(among My servants! Enter thou My Paradise! (٨٩:٢٧…٣٠

Of course, Watt may not accept that `sonship' exempts the `sons' from `ibadah. Even Paul, whatever his ideas about the Mosaic Law and the necessity of circumcision, will not grant such an exemption. Whoever does the `ibadah of God, .recognizes that he is an `abd

There is a reference in this chapter to Jesus' speech to his disciples, from which a Muslim or anyone else would draw conclusions entirely different from those deduced :by Watt. In John ١٥:١٥, Jesus is reported as saying to his disciples

I do not call you servants any longer, because a servant does not know what his master is doing. Instead I call you friends, because I have told you everything I have .heard from my Father

Apparently Jesus' disciples differentially called him `master' or `lord', which implied that they considered themselves as his servants or slaves. So Jesus tells them that he will treat them as his friends and equals now that he has taught them all that he had been taught by God, and now that their spiritual instruction has been completed. This .is a common practice in any institution of higher learning

Senior pupils, when after undergoing long years of training attain approximately the same degree of knowledge as their teachers, are treated by their teachers as equals and friends. Watt, however, with the purpose of detracting the Islamic usage of the term `abd at the back of his mind, draws another kind of conclusion; he says "This implies

that the slave or servant does not know what the plans and purposes of his master are whereas the son [i.e. Christ] does, and shares his knowledge with his friends [the ".[Christian believers

The inference `son of God'= divinity of the son, whose literal correlation seems inevitable, also surreptitiously creeps into the `sonship' of the believer. This is obvious

from the following statement of Watt, which is made easier for him by the vocabulary of the lines in Psalms ۸۲:۶, but which reduces monotheism to a mere verbal game Jesus was a pioneer in this field [i.e. sonship], and his followers became more fully sons and daughters of God as, following him, they understand God's purposes more .fully and seek to realize them

It might even be suggested that in so far as one comes to understand God's purposes and is committed to realizing them one enters into a sphere above the nousphere, perhaps to be called the theiosphere [the sphere of divinity], and Jesus would then be (the one who first found the way into this. (p. ۱۳۷

Watt makes the reader aware of the fluidity of symbolic language. At one place dealing with the problem as to how the `sonship' of Jesus differs from that of his followers, he suggests two explanations which do not harmonize with each other; then adds, “These suggestions do not harmonize with one another, though this does (not matter when we are dealing with symbolic language.” (p. ۱۳۶

One would expect that he would dismiss

p: ۵۲

the difference between the Islamic `Servant Lord' vocabulary and the Christian `Son…Father' vocabulary in the same spirit, especially since he recommends that we should view religious differences in an eirenic spirit and adopt a conciliatory approach .to apparent divergence in religious symbolism

One may say that with substitution of the words `servant' or `prophet' in place of the word `Son' in the New Testament (whenever used for Christ) and the word `Lord' throughout for the word `Father', nearly ninety nine per cent of doctrinal differences between Islam and Christianity will evaporate like mist. But despite his frequent harping on the theme of symbolism in religious language, he turns out to be a staunch literalist at the end, where he, perhaps unknowingly, gives vent to a self contradictory .idea

In the light of what was said earlier about symbolic language, the conception of `son of God' is to be regarded as expressing, in the best way possible for us, something real about God. The symbol of Divine sonship implies that a human being may have insight into His purposes and into His relationship with humanity, and may be able to (do something towards realizing the purposes. (p. ۱۳۷

According to Islam, God imparted the knowledge of His aims and purposes to man not just two thousand years ago, but at the time of the creation of Adam, who was designated to fulfill the role of God's deputy and vicegerent (khalifah) on the earth. Whereas according to the Bible, God forbade Adam and Eve

p: ۵۳

from eating the fruit of the `tree of knowledge of what is good and what is bad' (Genesis ۲:۱۷) and expelled them from paradise, saying "Now the man has become like ,(one of us and has knowledge of what is good and what is bad" (Genesis ۳:۲۲

According to the Qur'an God gave all knowledge to Adam before everything even before he was given a spouse to live with (۲:۳۱) and made all angels prostrate themselves before Adam in respect for his superior knowledge (۲:۳۱...۳۴). At least twenty times the Qur'an speaks of God as the teacher of men (۲:۳۲, ۹۶:۴,۵, ۵:۱۱۰, ۱۲:۱۰۱, ۴:۱۱۳, ۲:۲۳۹, ۱۸:۶۵, etc.). The Holy Prophet (saws) is asked to constantly pray to God for .(the increase in his knowledge (۲۰:۱۱۴

The abstract noun `ilm (knowledge) occurs about a hundred times in the Qur'an. The various derivatives of the root `alima (he knew) occur more than seven hundred times in the Qur'an. In fact it may be stated that no religious scripture talks of .knowledge so often and profusely as the Holy Qur'an

It indeed requires a lot of naivety to hold on the one hand that God expelled Adam jealously na'udhu billah...for attempting to share His knowledge, and on the other hand to profess that He later became so indulgent as to adopt human beings as sons and offer them "insight into His purposes and into His relationship with humanity," which ultimately turns out to be no more than `insight' into the `sonship' and

`divinity' of

p: ۵۴

Christ; because `sonship' and `divinity' may signify power, but do not add to Christ's .character reflected in his words and deeds

The phrases "King of Israel, Son of God," or the idea contained in them, which recurs in several places in the Old and the New Testaments with different wordings and, as we said, expresses the nationalist and political hopes of the Jews embodied in the fantasies of an Israeli super king. What these phrases meant to the common Jew of Christ's times may be said to be something like this "God will send a king of David's .descent who will reestablish the Jewish self rule

He will regain not only the independence of the Jews now lost for almost five hundred years, but also will defeat and subjugate all other nations to the Israelites. That super king of the future will be an undefeatable and irresistible potentate backed by the .power of the Almighty

He will be a man `well connected' and one who enjoys much influence at the `top' (connections with the most powerful had an irresistible charm and prestige for the Jews, who were for generations used to slavery and second class citizenship, as is .(apparent from many passages of the different books of the Old Testaments

He will have great temporal power, and his dynasty will rule for ever. This will be on account of the great favour and protection of the Superpower that he will enjoy (the ,mightiest `superpower' was God in the Jewish religious imagination, who

p: ۵۵

unlike other terrestrial powers, who were enemies of the Jewish self rule, was .(sympathetic to the Jews and considered them His own people

The idea contained in "King of Israel, Son of God" neatly sums up the passionate political hopes conceivable for the Jewish religious imagination. It recurringly echoes

through the Bible and had acquired great importance for the Jews during the days of .political turmoil that preceded and followed the times of Jesus Christ

Moreover, the office of Prophethood had lost all charm for them, and the prophets were considered to be obstructive holy men who had nothing to offer except moral admonition and threatening prophecies of greater evils and sufferings. Jesus, in the Gospels, is reported as accusing the Jewish priesthood of killing many prophets. At another place, after the cold reception he had by the people in his own hometown of .Nazareth, Jesus remarks that a prophet is not well received in his own town

Familiarity breeds contempt, it is said, and perhaps the Jews were so much used to ignore the reproaches of the prophets that many followers of Christ thought it necessary to propagate his message by dubbing him something else than as a "prophet", a term which had lost its prestige with the Jews. On the contrary, such terms as "King of the Jews" and "Son of God ", because of their political significance and connotations of power, were more welcome to the prevailing Jewish taste and, certainly, to the Hellenic mind of the

Gentiles, who were more familiar with such ideas as they were common in Greek and .Roman mythologies

In our own times, the religious belief in God has become almost an anachronism and the modern Jews being more at home in modern terminology, new terms are substituted for ancient fantasies and ambitions. One may say that the same idea contained in "King of Israel, Son of God" is reflected in the contemporary phrases "the ".Greater Israel, the special friend of the U.S

These contemporary phrases represent the ancient Jewish ambitions and fantasies, which have been realized through the efforts of the Western powers through the formation of the Zionist state in Palestine. The state of Israel now takes the place of the ancient fantasies about the "promised king of the Jews", who failed to keep his appointment. Moreover, adoption of the Western secular view of reality and history

has led the Zionists to look forward to the more tangible "sonship" and "fatherhood" of .a terrestrial superpower, the U.S. in this case

However, ancient fantasies linger with obdurate tenacity and the ancient relationship of "sonship" is considered fulfilled in the "special relationship" between the U.S. and Israel. In fact several U.S. officials, including presidents, on innumerable occasions, have referred to "the special relationship" of the U.S. with Israel. The `special relationship' idea is also reflected in the writings of Anti…Zionist Muslims when they call ".Israel "an illegitimate child of the U.S. imperialism

Therefore, from the Muslim viewpoint, Christian religious terminology, on which the characteristic

p: ۵۷

Christian doctrines are based, is a continuation of the religio…political vocabulary of the pre…Christian Judaism, and a transference of the political vocabulary which was given a spiritual and theological import by the majority of Jewish followers of Christ who, having separated from traditional Judaism and the practice of the Mosaic Law, continued to hold on to the ancient fantasies in the coming of the "kingdom of God" and the rule of the Son. Those fantasies were also not abandoned by the traditional .Jews and have survived until the modern times

In the final analysis, therefore, the doctrine of incarnation or `Sonship' is a doctrine of power under the cloak of spirituality. In this sense Neitzsche, who extolled power, was a Christian despite his condemnation of the Christian morality, which he called `slave morality.' In Islam, on the other hand, even though God is Omnipotent, even the worship of God is the worship of the Divine Character signified by the oft…repeated .Names such as Rahman and Rahim

:(Its Prophet, in the first place, is an `abd before he is a rasul (Messenger

أشهد أن محمدًا عبده ورسوله

he represents rahmah (mercy), although he enjoyed temporal power. The Prophet (S)

was a ruler, but his temporal `power is overshadowed in the Muslim's mind by his spiritual station. He preferred the humility of a slave and despised the power and .pomp of kings

Last Chapter

Finally, in the book's last chapter, Watt, very briefly, comes to deal with the contemporary issues and problems indicated in the title of the

book. His viewpoint is not different from that of the Western media regarding the .contemporary resurgence in the world of Islam

About the motives underlying the Islamic revival, he says the old religious intellectual class of the `ulama' or jurists has tended to resist ...change and as a result its power and influence has greatly declined. Since about ۱۹۵۰ the speed of change has greatly accelerated, and this has left the masses of ordinary people utterly bewildered and feeling anxious and insecure, as they saw the disappearance of familiar objects and .ways of acting and their replacement by things strange and new

It is chiefly out of this feeling of insecurity that the Islamic resurgence or revival has developed People looking for security think of `the good old days' when the old religion was properly observed. One aspect of this insecurity is the fear of being, as it .were, drowned in Western culture and losing one's traditional identity

Consequently in turning to the old religion they tend to emphasize those features which make it culturally distinct from the West, such as prohibition of alcohol and usury and the use of the veil and similar coverings by women, this type of response can indeed be traced back for centuries. A not so distant example comes from the India of about one hundred and fifty years ago, where the Hindus were eagerly getting Western education for their children, while the Muslims remained aloof; and the not surprising result was that the best government

posts open to Indians nearly all went to Hindus, while the Hindus also benefited in (other ways. (p. ١۴٢

As is obvious from these remarks, Watt is disposed to view the Islamic revival in a negative light and elsewhere refers to it as being a manifestation of “extreme conservatism.” This shows that Watt is entirely out of touch with the contemporary world reality. He fails to notice many aspects which are very significant in the present .Islamic movement

His reference to “the good old days” of the British rule in India and the attitude of Muslims towards the alien rulers is totally irrelevant in the context of the present world…wide Islamic revival. He does not say anything about the prominent aims and .objectives of the present Islamic resurgence

The goals of the present Islamic resurgence are multifarious and embrace a wide range of activities from politics to education. In the political domain, which represents a very important facet of the Islamic resurgence, the aims might be stated to be

Replacement of the present so called secular regimes, most of which are . ١ oppressive dictatorships controlled by pro Western military juntas, by purely Islamic .states in which the participation of the people in their country's destiny is ensured

Ending foreign political, military, and economic interference in the affairs of Muslim .٢ .countries; ٣. Political and economic justice, independence, and self sufficiency

Harmonization of all political, economic, social and educational policies with the .۴ .Islamic Shari'ah

:The social and educational objectives must be stated as

Revival of .١

p: ۶٠

the true social and ethical values of Islam

Emphasis on the unity of the world wide Muslim community .۲

The need to reorient the educational infrastructure in the Muslim countries in .۳ .accordance with the Islamic goals and values

The need to raise the level of scientific and technological education and research in .۴ .the Muslim countries

The need to dissociate modern technology and industrial practice from the .۵ undesirable cultural accretions of the West, and to give a human and Islamic direction .to the application and use of science and technology

The need to subordinate the entire legal structure in the Muslim countries to Islamic .۶ .Shari'ah

In the sphere of economics, the objective may be stated as

The need for development of economic, fiscal and commercial policies which are in .۱ .agreement with the Islamic teachings

The need to promote trade and mutual co-operation between Muslim countries in .۲ .the fields of industrial production and scientific research

.The need to make the Muslim world economically self-reliant and self-sufficient .۳

Apart from these, many more objectives can be mentioned which are stressed by the so called Muslim fundamentalists. More than anything else, the Islamic revival is not motivated by a desire to recreate a past or to bring back `the good old days' as Watt remarks. There is indeed a sense of anxiety among the Muslims, for they feel that the Islamic values are threatened and challenged, but not an anxiety caused by '.`disappearance of familiar objects and ways of acting

Indeed, there is a strong

desire to obliterate the hitherto familiar and hated idols in the field of politics and their dictatorial ways of administering affairs and to substitute them with hitherto forgotten and forsaken ideals and `ways of acting' at the level of political and communal life, ideals which are deeply ingrained in the Muslim consciousness in the .(form of the Sunnah of the Prophet (saws

There is no resistance to change in the Muslim world, in the sense familiar to Western sociologists, for such resistance would have come from the elderly and the aged. The contemporary Islamic revival, on the contrary, is centered around the revolt of the Muslim youth against the social conditions to which the members of the senior generation have already adapted, but which are not acceptable to the young. Therefore, it is ignorance to say that the Islamic resurgence represents resistance to change. In fact it is a call for a drastic change and a socio…political, ethico…legal, .economic and Cultural Revolution

Furthermore, it is the secular West which feels insecure and threatened by the kind of fundamental changes demanded by the Muslim revivalists. It is the West which is bewildered and feels anxious and insecure when confronted with such a phenomenon .as the Islamic Revolution in Iran, and strives to maintain the status quo

It is the Western powers which are plunged into depths of insecurity and anxiety at the spectacle of disappearance of the familiar pawns who have assisted them in keeping the Muslim world under Western control since

a long time. In the present world situation, it is the capitalist West and the socialist East which represents the forces of reaction and conservatism, and strives to keep intact their respective domains of hegemony which fell into their hands during and .after the Second World War

The Islamic resurgence is not a negation of the positive changes brought about by the technological and industrial advancements, but a negation of the political and cultural appendages which have accompanied the indiscriminate introduction of technology

and industry into the Third World by unthinking governments and negligent vested interests. `Modernization,' which in the Western terminology means introduction of Western secular patterns of life into Muslim countries, in this special sense has been considered to be an attendant of the Western technological and highly sophisticated industrial methods. The Islamic revival negates the assumption of necessary correlation between technology and the so called modernization, which has proved to .be an attending evil

Watt, like a bad physician, makes a wrong diagnosis of the contemporary problems of the Muslim world, and prescribes a worse remedy. He cites the example of al_Ghazali as a model of "creative response" to the crucial contemporary problems. He describes a "creative response" as the response of a person "who tries to effect a degree of harmony between these [the central religious doctrines] and the current scientific and philosophical outlook, and in so doing to provide a basis for dealing with social and ".political problems

This definition is quite convincing, but it is inappropriate

p: ۶۳

to cite al_Ghazali as an example of it. Al_Ghazali, despite his greatness as a thinker, represents a great reactionary force in the history of Muslim thought. His was a reactionary response to the challenge of his age. By discouraging the pursuit of philosophy and natural sciences, he provided a negative or rather destructive solution to the challenge that was invading the Muslim society, and caused much damage to the progress of Muslim science and philosophy. To project and recommend him as an .archetype of "creative response" is equal to prescribe poison as a life_saving drug

Watt is deeply infatuated with the desire to defend the Christian doctrines by diluting Islamic disapproval of them. In this chapter also, where one would expect him to deal with the contemporary issues of Islam and Christianity, he relapses into a discussion of the Christian belief in Christ's crucifixion. He regrets that, because Muslims have not accepted the historical fact of the crucifixion of Jesus, they have failed to understand most of the Christian teaching about the meaning of his death and

.'resurrection and the nature of his work of `salvation

By the standards of modern historiography the crucifixion of Jesus is one of the most certain events in past history, as certain dare one say it? As the fact that Muhammad (proclaimed the religion of Islam in Mecca about the year ۶۱۰. (p. ۱۴۴

Then he goes on to argue that the Qur'anic verses which (apparently, according to Watt) deny that Jesus underwent crucifixion do not necessarily

p: ۶۴

refute crucifixion "when looked in an eirenic spirit." But as we said, the Qur'anic denial of Jesus' crucifixion was firmly corroborated by reliable hadith. According to Islamic hadith, it was Judas Iscariot, the traitor, who was crucified, his appearance having .been changed to resemble that of Christ

The fact of crucifixion of Judas, whom all Jews, including the disciples and Christ's own mother, took for Christ, is accepted by the Qur'an and the hadith. Islam denies Jesus' crucifixion and all the other Christian doctrines and beliefs which are based on the belief in his death on the cross, such as the doctrine of atonement, the doctrine that the Mosaic Law became inoperative with him and that the believer in the resurrected .Christ need not in fact should not follow the Mosaic Law, and other related beliefs

Moreover, the Islamic belief that Jesus did not die upon the cross and that the Mosaic Law with small modifications was made obligatory for Christians to follow, and that Jesus was just a man and a prophet, not the `Son' of God or God all are confirmed expressly by one of the Christian gospels, the Gospel of Barnabas, which is, however, included by official Christianity among the writings conveniently dubbed as .'`apocrypha

There have been Christian sects who held identical beliefs, but who are also, as conveniently, branded `heretic' or `unorthodox' by the majority, the `orthodox' Christians. Watt, as we pointed out earlier adopts a statistical criterion of truth, a criterion which has been

p: ۶۵

considered by the statistical majority, in the history of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, .as the criterion of orthodoxy

p: ۶۶

About center

In the name of Allah

هَلْيَسْتَوِيالَّذِينَيَعْلَمُونَوَالَّذِينَلَايَعْلَمُونَ

?Are those who know equal to those who do not know

al-Zumar: ۹

:Introduction

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan, from ۲۰۰۷, under the authority of Ayatollah Haj SayyedHasanFaqihImami (God blesses his soul), by sincere and daily efforts of university and seminary elites and sophisticated groups began its activities .in religious, cultural and scientific fields

:Manifesto

Ghaemiyeh Computer Research Institute of Isfahan in order to facilitate and accelerate the accessibility of researchers to the books and tools of research, in the field of Islamic science, and regarding the multiplicity and dispersion of active centers in this field

and numerous and inaccessible sources by a mere scientific intention and far from any kind of social, political, tribal and personal prejudices and currents, based on performing a project in the shape of (management of produced and published works from all Shia centers) tries to provide a rich and free collection of books and research papers for the experts, and helpful contents and discussions for the educated generation and all classes of people interested in reading, with various formats in the .cyberspace

:Our Goals are

(propagating the culture and teachings of Thaqalayn (Quran and Ahlulbayt p.b.u.t-
encouraging the populace particularly the youth in investigating the religious issues-
replacing useful contents with useless ones in the cellphones, tablets and computers-
providing services for seminary and university researchers-
spreading culture study in the publich-
paving the way for the publications and authors to digitize their works-

:Policies
acting according to the legal licenses-
relationship with similar centers-
avoiding parallel working-
merely presenting scientific contents-
mentioning the sources-
.It's obvious that all the responsibilities are due to the author

:Other activities of the institute
Publication of books, booklets and other editions-
Holding book reading competitions-
Producing virtual, three dimensional exhibitions, panoramas of religious and tourism-
places
.Producing animations, computer games and etc-
Launching the website with this address: www.ghaemiyeh.com-
Fabricatingdramatic and speech works-
Launching the system of answering religious, ethical and doctrinal questions-
Designing systems of accounting, media and mobile, automatic and handy systems,-
web kiosks
Holding virtual educational courses for the public-
Holding virtual teacher-training courses-
Producing thousands of research software in three languages (Persian, Arabic and-
English) which can be performed in computers, tablets and cellphones and available
and downloadable with eight international formats: JAVA, ANDROID, EPUB, CHM, PDF,
HTML, CHM, GHB on the website

Also producing four markets named "Ghaemiyeh Book Market" with Android, IOS,-WINDOWS PHONE and WINDOWS editions

:Appreciation

We would appreciate the centers, institutes, publications, authors and all honorable .friends who contributed their help and data to us to reach the holy goal we follow

:Address of the central office

Isfahan, Abdorazaq St, Haj Mohammad JafarAbadei Alley, Shahid Mohammad HasanTavakkoly Alley, Number plate ۱۲۹, first floor

Website: www.ghbook.ir

Email: Info@ghbook.ir

Central office Tel: ۰۹۱۳۲۰۰۰۱۰۹

۰۲۱ ـ Tehran Tel: ۸۸۳۱۸۷۲۲

Commerce and sale: ۰۹۱۳۲۰۰۰۱۰۹

Users' affairs: ۰۹۱۳۲۰۰۰۱۰۹

Introduction of the Center – Ghaemiyeh Digital Library





